

DRAFT

SoBro

Neighborhood Plan



SoBro Planning Task Force

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VISION. KNOWLEDGE. ACTION.

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Cornerstone 2020 Vision Statement



In our vision of 2020, Louisville and Jefferson County is a community widely recognized for its high quality of life, sense of tradition and competitive spirit. Our children have inherited a livable, vibrant and economically diverse community. We have clearly recognized that the quality of life depends upon continued success in the economic marketplace and an ongoing commitment to the conservation of environmental resources which define our heritage and enhance the livability of our community.

Community residents share a sense of place and take great pride in their established and emerging neighborhoods which are culturally and economically diverse. Residents are proud of their differences in heritage and culture. Economic and educational opportunities are available to all residents, in every neighborhood. Every neighborhood is a safe place to live.

The community enjoys a rich fabric of urban and suburban areas, interwoven with environmental resources, accessible parks, open space and the Ohio River Corridor, all representing a heritage of natural beauty. A multi-modal transportation system serves and ties together the entire community. Unified government services enhance the ability of the community to speak with a single voice in matters related to the investment of human, environmental and capital resources.

The Cornerstone 2020 Vision for Louisville and Jefferson County is nothing less than the best of the past merged with the best of the future, creating a community where all residents can grow and prosper.

Introduction



Background

The SoBro (South of Broadway) neighborhood has a unique position, geographically and historically, within the context of greater Louisville Metro. The general boundaries of SoBro are Broadway on the north, Kentucky Avenue on the south, I-65 on the east and 9th Street on the west. In addition to this “core” of SoBro, there is a slender component of the neighborhood that extends from Kentucky Street southward to Hill Street between 7th and 9th Streets. This neighborhood, as seen on the accompanying map, primarily serves as the linchpin for Downtown Louisville and Old Louisville/Limerick. As such, it has both the opportunity and urban responsibility to serve as a compatible, transitional and bridging neighborhood. It must provide appropriate land uses that serve not only its own resident and business populations but also those of the adjacent areas. Its urban form, in terms of building heights, densities and spatial configurations, must satisfy its desire to become a cohesive mixed-use district that ties together the high-rise character and commercial uses of Louisville’s Downtown with the primarily low-rise, residential districts of Old Louisville and Limerick.

A review of Sanborn maps from 1892, 1905 and even as late as 1941, shows that SoBro was once a vibrant neighborhood, completely covered with residential, institutional and commercial buildings. Land within the district was at a premium with hardly a vacant lot to be found. In the last fifty years that dense, active character has been lost as urban flight, proliferation of commercial land uses and Urban Renewal have left vacant buildings and empty land parcels, most of which now serve as surface parking lots.

Purpose

The SoBro Plan was initiated expressly to consider the current conditions within this district, analyze its strengths and weaknesses and through a series of site visits, demographic analysis, Task Force meetings and design workshops, develop both a future vision of what SoBro should and could become and a group of planning and implementation recommendations to help it reach its potential. Several other planning projects have walked on this same ground over the past four decades with the most recent being the Old Louisville/Limerick Neighborhood Plan Amendments of 2000 and a follow-up SoBro Neighborhood Plan



study generated by a University of Louisville Master of Urban Planning (MUP) Program Capstone Studio class in 2004. Also in 2000, a charrette lead by the Louisville Development Authority (now Louisville Metro Economic Development Department) and the Louisville Community Design Center explored the issues and opportunities presented in the SoBro area. Additionally, the Downtown Development Plan addressed SoBro as a critical subarea in the future vitality of Louisville's downtown. Many of the ideas and recommendations from these previous projects and reports are reflected in this neighborhood plan.

Most recently, summer and fall 2006 design studio classes focusing on urban design analysis conducted at Louisville's Urban Design Studio combined students from both the University of Kentucky's School of Architecture and the University of Louisville's MUP program. Some of the results or their creative thinking are contained within this plan report as well (see Urban Design chapter and Appendix).

Task Force Process

In 2004, Mayor Jerry Abramson appointed a task force of stakeholders to address the diverse issues faced in the SoBro area. The SoBro Neighborhood Plan Task Force generally followed a three-step process of Inventory, Analysis and Synthesis as it progressed towards its goal of creating the plan's framework. Inventory of SoBro's past was conducted through a presentation of historic photos of the neighborhood, investigation of the 1905 Sanborn maps for this area and a narrative look at the evolution of SoBro's land use and form over the past two hundred years. Current conditions were assessed via on-the-ground reconnaissance, photographic documentation of SoBro from both street level and the roof of The 800 Building and a two-hour narrated bus tour of the neighborhood during which current business owners and neighborhood workers participated and added their own narratives about the quality of living and working in SoBro today. In addition, the task force weighed in on the neighborhood's future viability through a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). Results of this analysis are detailed in the Neighborhood Identity chapter, page 15. Furthermore, Louisville Metro's Planning and Design Services staff provided information and maps to advance everyone's knowledge of SoBro's existing land use, community form and population characteristics.

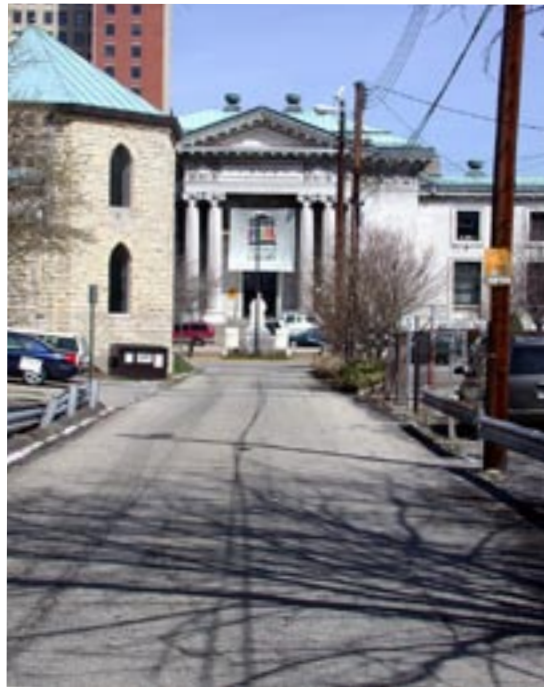
Following this Inventory phase, an analysis of existing conditions provided the groundwork for the eventual formation, or synthesis, of planning and strategy recommendations. The plan was



The 2002 Downtown Development Plan recognized SoBro as a sub-area of the downtown core that would serve to strengthen and compliment not only the core, but all other surrounding neighborhoods.



shaped through discussions, visioning, workshop participation and assistance from Metro Planning Staff members and the task force.



While parking lots and alleys in most of SoBro were identified as potential weaknesses, they also provide unique opportunities for redevelopment as building lots or green space and connectors.